



## yellow-headed blackbird

*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Aves
Order:	Passeriformes
Family:	Emberizidae

### Features

An adult yellow-headed blackbird is eight to 11 inches long. The male has a black body, bright yellow head and chest, and black wings with a few white patches. The female has a brown body (smaller than the male's body) and a yellow face.

### Natural History

The yellow-headed blackbird is a locally common migrant and summer resident. This bird is a very rare winter resident in Iowa. It winters from the southwestern United States through southern Mexico. It lives in sloughs and marshes. It eats insects, grains, and seeds. Its call is "krick" or "kack," like a rusty hinge. This bird rests low in the vegetation. Males begin arriving during April, but females often do not arrive until early May. Nesting occurs in May and June. The nest is attached to cattails in a marsh, about two or three feet above the water. Three to five tan eggs with dark markings are laid. Fall migration begins in July.

### Habitats

Natural lakes and prairie marshes

### Iowa Status

common; native

### Iowa Range

summer: northern half of Iowa and scattered in southern Iowa in suitable habitats; migrant: statewide

### Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.